A

SERMON

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

OF

Mrs. *MARY WILKS.*

BY

JAMES FOSTER.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

Francis Wilks, *Eſq;*

SIR,

AS you ſtood in ſo near and tender a Relation to the Deceaſed, *it will be expected that the following Sermon ſhould be inſcribed to your Name; and 'tis more to comply with the cuſtom of the times, and common notions of decency, than from any opinion I have, either of the neceſſity of the thing in itſelf, or of your affecting ſuch a public addreſs, that I make this Dedication.*

IN an age ſo fond of novelty, *I am ſenſible, it is extremely difficult to pleaſe on ſubjects of univerſal importance and uſe, where the moſt obvious thoughts are always the beſt, and every thing that eſcapes the general obſervation, every thing new and labour'd, is likely to be unnatural and trifling. Upon which account the publication of this plain diſcourſe may be thought, perhaps, to need ſome apology. However, I ſhall not attempt any thing that way, having made it a rule never to write what I think myſelf obliged to excuſe; and being fully convinc'd, that what is not fit to be publiſh'd will not bear an*

apology, what may be of ſervice to the world needs none.

IF what I here offer you be the means of moderating your grief for the loſs of your late excellent and beloved Conſort; *if it fixes on your mind a more ſtrong and laſting impreſſion of her amiable qualities, confirms your virtue, and increaſes your uſefulneſs: and if it inſpires others (eſpecially thoſe who were either nearly related to her, or perſonally acquainted with her worth) with the laudable ambition of imitating Her Piety, Generoſity, good Oeconomy, Contempt of the world, and the other virtues that adorned and beautified her character, and teaches them the true value and right improvement of life, I ſhall think myſelf ſufficiently honoured; and be but little concern'd at the cenſures of thoſe, who can't be entertain'd unleſs they are* ſurprized, *nor reliſh any diſcourſes, which, at the ſame time they have a tendency to better their tempers, and refine their morals, do not alſo amuſe their* curioſity. *I am, with the ſincereſt reſpect,*

SIR,

Your obliged, and
moſt humble Servant,

J. Foſter.

March the 20th,
1731.

[redacted]

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2.

It is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to go to the houſe of feaſting.——

THIS obſervation of *Solomon* will, I am perſuaded, appear very extravagant to the generality of mankind, who are too averſe to grave and ſerious reflections, and given up to thoughtleſneſs and gaiety. They ſeem to think that they were made for no higher end than to gratify their appetites, and paſs away their time in a continual circle of vanity and pleaſure; and therefore every thing that has a ſolemn aſpect, and damps the ſprightlineſs and levity of their minds, is either induſtriouſly avoided, or, if it falls in their way, ſoon diverted by a

hurry of buſineſs, trifling amuſements, or freſh purſuits of luxury. It is upon this account that *religion itſelf*, which is the perfection of human nature, and renders it truly great and amiable, and of conſequence muſt be the only foundation of exalted, uniform, and manly pleaſure; that religion, I ſay, which ennobles and compoſes the mind, and can alone ſupport it under all the various and unequal ſcenes of life, is repreſented as a peeviſh, inſlaving, melancholy ſcheme of Enthuſiaſm, that ſours our tempers, and obliges us to unneceſſary ſeverities, and conſequently is unfit for any to concern themſelves with, but thoſe who are either weary of life, or paſt reliſhing the enjoyments of it. Such ſentiments are apt eſpecially to prevail in the heat of youth, when the ſpirits are briſk and lively, and the paſſions head-ſtrong and impetuous.

It is indeed very ſtrange, that men, who are reaſonable creatures, ſhould eſteem it either their honour or privilege to be excuſed from thinking about mat-

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ters of the higheſt importance; or, that they ſhould be fond of laying aſide their reaſon, and giving an unbounded ſcope to ſenſual and irregular paſſions, when the exerciſe of thought and reflection is both the peculiar dignity, and happineſs of their nature. But 'tis undeniable fact, that they greatly affect a gay, indolent life, and don't care to converſe much with ſuch objects as have a ſolemnity and awfulneſs attending them, and naturally diſpoſe for ſerious conſideration, and an impartial review of their conduct. And from this ſource proceed the greateſt errors and diſorders in human life.

But amongſt all the graver ſubjects that can employ our thoughts, there is nothing ſo mortifying to light and ſenſual minds, as the contemplation of *Death*. Reflections upon mortality, and the ſhortneſs, and infinite uncertainty of the preſent being, afford ſuch perſons none but diſagreeable and gloomy proſpects.—— They repreſent to them ſtrongly the emptineſs of their moſt admired and

applauded pleaſures, that all the gay ſcenes of pomp and luxury, with which they are ſo highly delighted, will ſoon vaniſh. —— They put them upon conſidering what is the great end of life, and what will be the conſequence of their behaviour after death, which has a natural tendency to create ſuch uneaſy ſuſpicions and terrors, as will be a great check to the freedom of their vitious exceſſes. And yet thoſe melancholy occurrences, in which we converſe, as it were, immediately with death, and have a viſible proof of the uncertainty and tranſitorineſs of all worldly honour, grandeur, and pleaſure, are what *Solomon* had chiefly in view when he ſays, *It is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting*; as is evident from the words which immediately follow, *For that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.* And, I doubt not, but it will appear from the enſuing diſcourſe, that this remark is founded on a juſt knowledge and experience of human nature, how extravagant ſoever it may ſeem to the giddy and unthinking, and how-

however contrary it is to the genius, and inclinations of the looſe and voluptuous part of mankind.

ARE we then, it may be aſk'd, to give ourſelves up to melancholy, and paſs our days in a gloomy retirement from the world, and refuſe to enjoy thoſe conveniences and agreeable accommodations, which the wiſe and gracious author of nature hath furniſhed out for us? or is it our duty to let our thoughts dwell chiefly on the dark ſide of life, on inſtances of diſtreſs and mortality? I anſwer, By no means. Religion is very far from being an enemy to lawful pleaſure, and inſtead of deſtroying that innocent chearfulneſs and vivacity of temper, which renders us more fit for diſcharging both the duties of piety, and the offices of benevolence and friendſhip, lays the moſt natural and ſolid foundation for it. 'Tis not, therefore, the deſign of the wiſe man in the text to diſcourage any thing of this kind, which is conſiſtent with the ſevereſt rules of virtue; but only to condemn mens ſpending the greateſt part of their time in idle

idle mirth and luxury, that licentious and exorbitant pleaſure which, inſtead of being uſed as a relaxation, to eaſe and unbend the ſpirits, is purſued as the main end of life, and leaves none, or but very little room for thoſe more ſolid and uſeful contemplations and exerciſes, which ſo highly become us as reaſonable beings, and creatures expecting a ſtate of immortality.

We are not abſolutely forbid *to go to the houſe of feaſting*; nor are we to conſider the words as preſcribing an univerſal rule, that holds true in every circumſtance, and with reſpect to all complections and tempers. For the author of this book has himſelf obſerved in another part of it, that *to every thing* there is *a ſeaſon, a time to laugh* as well as *a time to weep* *; and the true wiſdom of mankind lies in improving the proper occaſions for both. This is following nature, and making the right uſe of life. And in all caſes, where the ſpirits are depreſs'd, and the mind over-run with

* Chap. 3. ver. 1, 4.

gloom

gloom and melancholy, a wiſe man would think it very abſurd and unnatural to recommend *the houſe of mourning*; and rather adviſe, on the contrary, that care be taken to avoid, as much as poſſible, all ſuch diſmal mortifying ſcenes, as have a tendency, inſtead of removing, to feed and ſtrengthen this unhappy diſtemper, which renders men a burthen to themſelves, a conſtant uneaſineſs and trouble to their friends, and, oftentimes, quite uſeleſs to ſociety. So that if we interpret theſe words of *Solomon* with ſuch limitations and exceptions, as the nature of the thing itſelf plainly directs to, and which are abſolutely neceſſary not only to make him a rational, but a conſiſtent writer, the ſenſe of them muſt be ſomewhat to this purpoſe; that " tho the " joy of a feſtival be, in itſelf, very in- " nocent, frequently very becoming, *to* " *go to the houſe of mourning*, when " proper occaſions preſent themſelves, " is, in general, and except to a few " dark, dejected, and gloomy tempers, " much more improving; and that, in- " ſtead of giving a looſe to ſenſual mirth

" and

" and luxury, we ſhould act a much wi-
" ſer part, if we convers'd ſometimes with
" mournful objects, and the ſolemn ap-
" pearances of death, which will call in
" our wandring thoughts, and fix them
" on the moſt important ſubjects; the
" due conſideration of which will, pro-
" bably, be attended with very great and
" laſting advantages." This is the point which I am now to explain, and improve.

AND, in general, while we purſue a conſtant round of gaiety and pleaſure, we are in great danger of contracting an habitual levity of mind. The bulk of mankind are too much diſinclin'd to ſerious thought, even about points that are of the utmoſt conſequence to their happineſs. Their paſſions are too apt to get the aſcendant, ſo as to hinder them from attending, as they ought, to the dictates of reaſon and religion. They therefore always want ſomething to ballance the mind, and keep it ſteddy; ſomething that will put them upon thinking, inſtead of occaſions to divert them from it. But a

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continued ſucceſſion of amuſing objects, and agreeable entertainments, inſtead of being a help to grave and uſeful reflection, is the moſt likely thing in the world to prevent it, as it engroſſes their attention, and fixes it to trifles. So that the perſons who are very much addicted to theſe pleaſures have ſcarce any time for conſideration; or if they had, the mind being captivated and bewitched by them, and its faculties enervated and broken, would find themſelves indiſpoſed for thinking at all, or, at leaſt, for thinking to a good purpoſe, on the moſt important and momentous ſubjects.

But the converſing with ſolemn objects, that leave an awful impreſſion upon us, naturally corrects the heat and extravagance of the paſſions, and makes us cool and deliberate. It both prepares the mind for ſerious thinking, and ſuggeſts proper matter for it. Inſtances of mortality eſpecially (and the more if they are ſudden, and happen in the full ſtrength and vigour of youth; or if it be the death of a friend, of one in affluent cir-

cumſtances, or remarkable for a virtuous and uſeful character) muſt needs be very affecting to every man that has not loſt all reflection, and is not quite abandoned to a careleſs and diſſolute life. This I take to be the general ground of *Solomon*'s obſervation in the text. But becauſe the chief reaſon why he choſe rather *to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting* was, that the former naturally ſuggeſts ſeveral moſt important and uſeful conſiderations, and is of the utmoſt advantage in regulating our temper and conduct; all that I ſhall do farther, to illuſtrate the truth of this remark, is to ſhew more particularly what beneficial conſequences may reaſonably be expected from it. And as this is a very copious ſubject, and affords matter for large diſcourſe, I ſhall not have time to expatiate, and run into all the particulars that might be mentioned, but muſt confine myſelf to brief and general hints. And,

I. One advantage of *going to the houſe of mourning* is, that it tends to render death

death familiar to us, or at leaſt, to deſtroy, in a great meaſure, that extreme dread of it, which operates ſo viſibly in the generality of mankind. Death is one of the ſtated laws of nature, and what all look upon as a neceſſary and unavoidable event, and this, one would think, ſhould put every man upon endeavouring after ſuch a degree of reſolution and conſtancy, as will inable him to ſubmit to it decently. Preſence and firmneſs of mind, in a condition that to the bulk of the world is ſo frightful, is manly, and repreſents our nature in a worthy and advantageous light; whereas dejectedneſs and anxiety, at an event that is natural, and the conſtitution of an all-wiſe providence, muſt argue either cowardiſe, or guilt, both of which are diſhonourable to human nature. The former of theſe is likewiſe very deſirable for the comfort of our friends who may ſurvive us; and of great uſe to deſtroy in others a ſlaviſh fear of death, and inſpire ſuch a rational contempt of it, as is abſolutely neceſſary to the undertaking and accompliſhing many great deſigns of the utmoſt ſervice to

mankind. Add to this, that it muſt be an unſpeakable happineſs to the dying perſon himſelf, when his ſpirits are faint and languid, when the preſent temporary ſcenes of honour, wealth, and pleaſure are removing for ever from his view, and he is juſt about to be torn from his moſt intimate acquaintance, and deareſt friends, whoſe tender and obliging ſorrow for the ſeparation, increaſes the ſting of death: it muſt, I ſay, be an unſpeakable happineſs to the dying perſon himſelf, in this laſt extremity of nature, to bear up with ſteadineſs and compoſure. And as this good effect is very likely to be ſecured by ſerious meditations on our mortality, and making the thought of it habitual to the mind (which has a natural tendency to leſſen the terrors of death) ſuch reflections muſt, if it were only for this reaſon, be of the utmoſt advantage. But,

II. By *going to the houſe of mourning* we are ſtrongly taught the vanity of the world, and the uncertainty of its higheſt honours, and beſt enjoyments in every ſtage of human life. — — If we are apt

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to place our confidence in the vigour of youth; if the gaiety of our ſpirits, and the ſtrength of our paſſions prompt us to irregular and vitious purſuits, let us bring to our view ſome affecting inſtance of death happening to a perſon of a lively and healthful conſtitution, in the very flower of his days, and ſee whether it has not a natural tendency to check the heat and forwardneſs of our tempers, to reſtrain the inſolence of unruly appetites, and damp the eager deſire of licentious pleaſure. —— Or if any are exceſſively fond of beauty, let them ſurvey it, as it appears after death, humbled, faded, quite eclipſed, ſtript of all its alluring charms, exchanged for paleneſs and deformity, and creating averſion and horror, inſtead of admiration and delight. Such a ſpectacle, ſo peculiarly mortifying to this part of the pride of human nature, the gracefulneſs and dignity of its outward appearance, is much more inſtructive than the fineſt lectures of morality. It has a natural tendency, while the impreſſion continues, to extinguiſh looſe and impure deſires; and will convince us more effectually,

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than the moſt philoſophical and laboured ſpeculations, that we ought not to place our higheſt excellency and happineſs in ſo vain and precarious an ornament, but in the beauties of the mind, which will be always improving, and become more and more illuſtrious and amiable.——And when death hath levelled the rich and great with the pooreſt and baſeſt of the people, what a contemptible idea does this raiſe in us of the brigheſt ſcenes of worldly proſperity, and grandeur! When we conſider all mankind, princes and the meaneſt of their ſubjects, conquerors and ſlaves, renown'd ſtateſmen and warriors and the moſt inſignificant and obſcure, who have left behind them no name, no memorial either of their merit or infamy; when we conſider all, I ſay, of every degree and diſtinction, blended together in one promiſcuous ruin, we ſhall think very meanly of the ſeveral ſchemes, competitions, and intereſts, that have, in every age, engaged the chief attention of the world; it will naturally inſpire a greatneſs of temper ſuperior to the little accidents, and viciſſitudes of time, and

kill

kill all the ſeeds of ambition and envy: So that a familiar converſation with objects of mortality, and the reflections they naturally excite in us, tho they ſhould not make us neglect the world altogether, and pine away life in ſullenneſs and diſcontent, will give us ſuch a ſetled indifference towards the higheſt advantages, honours and pleaſures of it, that we ſhall enjoy them with moderation, and be able to part with them without loſing the firmneſs and conſtancy of our minds.

III. As going *to the houſe of mourning*, and ſerious meditations on death will give us a lively idea of the emptineſs and inſufficiency of all preſent pleaſures, they muſt, of courſe, raiſe our thoughts above this world, and teach us to expect our happineſs hereafter.——From moral pleaſures that never decay; and in that bleſſed ſtate, wherein the faculties of the mind will be inlarg'd and perfected, and the body refin'd from groſs appetites, and all principles of corruption and mortality, new-form'd an active, ſpiritual, and glorious vehicle, that it may be adapted to the

the nature of its inhabitant; and, inſtead of being a clog and incumbrance to it, rather aſſiſt its moſt inlarg'd operations, and vigorous purſuits of perfection.—When the weight of the ſenſitive and animal part of our compoſition ſhall no longer oppreſs and bear down the rational nature, and prevent its riſing to the noble purſuits of the intellectual and divine life.—And we ſhall have nothing to fear from the inſolence of the great, the cruelty of the perſecutor, the rage of open enemies, the treachery of pretended friends, or the miſchievous ſchemes of the crafty and deſigning; and be liable to ſuffer no uneaſineſs, injury, or violence from calumniating and ſlanderous tongues, from peeviſhneſs and ill-nature, from pride, envy, revenge, or any other ungovern'd and deſtructive paſſion: but enjoy the higheſt happineſs we are capable of, in ſociety with all the wiſe and good men that have lived from the beginning of the world, with their ſeveral excellencies improved and perfected, and refin'd from all their defects; and, which is above all other conſiderations, in the immediate preſence

preſence of God, and under the influences of his favour, who is the immutable fountain of life, and bleſſedneſs.—In ſhort, when we ſhall ſin, and ſuffer, and die no more; but be *as the angels of God in heaven* *.

AGAIN, An affecting ſenſe of our mortality will naturally lead us to a juſt eſtimate and conſideration of human life. We ſhall look upon it only as a preparatory ſcene, a ſtate of trial for eternity; and conſider ourſelves as under the inſpection of an all-wiſe, and almighty Being, who examines every part of our conduct, and is acquainted with our moſt ſecret ſprings and principles of action, and that we muſt, all, give an account of ourſelves to him, and have our final happineſs, or miſery determin'd by his righteous judgment. And nothing, ſurely, can be a more prevailing motive than this to a life of the ſtricteſt piety and virtue. Nothing can influence more ſtrongly to purity of thought and affection, as well

* *Matth.* 22. 30.

as regularity of outward behaviour, and to improve all the abilities and advantages we enjoy in the beſt manner, as ſo many talents for which we are anſwerable to the ſupreme diſpoſer of all things. So that, on many accounts, the obſervation in the text appears to be highly juſt and rational, *viz. That 'tis better to go to the houſe of mourning than to go to the houſe of feaſting*; the latter not affording any of thoſe uſeful reflections, which the former has been ſhewn ſo naturally to ſuggeſt, for the government of the paſſions, and conducting our practice.

It can't be amiſs, before we proceed farther, to make one remark upon what has been already offer'd; and that is, that converſing with the awful appearances of death, and ſerious reflections upon it, however they may alarm, and, perhaps, confound and terrify at firſt, where there is a conſcience burden'd with guilt, are ſo far from having a tendency to ſettle a melancholy habit, and damp the livelineſs and vigour of our ſpirits, that they are likely, in the end, to produce a quite

contrary effect. For it has been ſhewn, that they tend directly to deſtroy in us an anxious and tormenting fear of death, and to prevent our falling into thoſe vitious irregularities, which are the ſureſt cauſe of inward confuſion, and horror. On the contrary, they afford the ſtrongeſt arguments for a religious and virtuous life, which is the natural ſource of chearfulneſs, peace, and ſerenity of mind; and carry our thoughts beyond this vain, uncertain, and confus'd ſtate of things, to an immortal exiſtence, the contemplation of which muſt yield the moſt ſublime ſatisfaction, if there be any remaining ſenſe of the dignity, and large capacities of human nature, heighten all the innocent pleaſures of life, and alleviate the afflictions and evils of it.

I might mention ſome other advantages *of going to the houſe of mourning*, and, particularly, that it ſoftens our tempers, and inſpires generous ſentiments of humanity and compaſſion, and conſequently, diſpoſes more ſtrongly for diſcharging the duties of friendſhip, and all the offices of

ſocial life: but the time will not allow me to enlarge; and therefore I ſhall only add,

In the laſt place, that, on thoſe mournful occaſions, the good example of thoſe whoſe death we are particularly called upon to conſider and improve, is likely to have a greater influence upon us, and more ſtrongly to excite our imitation. For then, the levity of our tempers being corrected, there is room for calm reflection. We are at leiſure to ſurvey the greatneſs and beauty of a virtuous character, and diſpoſed for meditations of this kind. And the mind, in circumſtances that are ſo ſolemn and ſtriking, being not only free from prejudice, but in a peculiar manner tender, and ſuſceptible of good impreſſions, a worthy and amiable example can hardly fail of provoking our emulation more effectually than at other ſeaſons, when nothing remarkable happens to fix our attention to it, or elſe ſome part of it, and that perhaps not the leaſt excellent, is either concealed thro' modeſty, and to avoid the appear-

appearance of oſtentation and vain-glory, or obſcur'd by envy and calumny.

I ſhall therefore take occaſion here to give a ſhort account of the character of the *Deceaſed* (founded on the concurring teſtimony of all thoſe who convers'd moſt familiarly with her, and knew her moſt intimately) not for the ſake of making a florid panegyric on the dead, or complimenting the living; but with the view of recommending thoſe excellent virtues, which ſo much adorned her converſation. When perſons of eminent integrity are remov'd by death, it is an injury to thoſe who ſurvived to conceal the example of their virtues, which, by being ſet in a proper light, may be a means of infuſing the ſame principles, the ſame ſpirit of religion and true goodneſs into them. But then, what is ſaid on ſuch ſpecial occaſions ought not to be look'd upon as a precedent, or general rule to be obſerved in all diſcourſes of this nature; for 'tis a liberty which the miniſters of the goſpel may juſtly claim, as preachers of truth and righteouſneſs, to ſay much, or little,

little, or nothing at all concerning the characters of the dead, juſt as the honour of God, and the good of mankind require.

THIS excellent perſon having had the advantage of a good education, her mind was impreſs'd betimes with lively ſentiments of religion and virtue, which made the practice of it ſo natural and eaſy to her, ſo uniform and regular. She had cultivated, very early, a ſerious reverence of her Maker, a ſenſe of his favour as her ſupreme and ultimate happineſs, and a ſollicitous care to pleaſe him; and continued to diſcover the ſame diſpoſition to the laſt, by conſtant exerciſes of a rational but fervent devotion, and a particular regard to the public worſhip of God, and the poſitive inſtitutions of chriſtianity, in which, I heartily wiſh, for the honour of the chriſtian name, and the revival of the primitive ſpirit of piety, her example was univerſally imitated. By this means ſhe acquired, and gave noble proofs of an abſolute reſignation to the will of God, and humble ſubmiſſion

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to the authority of his providence; which had ſuch an uncommon and conſtant influence on her temper, that it made her contented in every condition, and eaſy under all proſpects. For ſhe frequently expreſs'd, to thoſe who converſed moſt nearly with her, great thankfulneſs to God for the preſent affluence and plenty of her ſtation; but, at the ſame time, gave herſelf up intirely to the diſpoſal of the great governor of the world, and was prepared for any change in her circumſtances, that he, in his infinite wiſdom, might think moſt proper. And that ſpirit of piety, that inclined her to be ſo regular and conſtant in all the duties of it herſelf, made her likewiſe very deſirous to cultivate a ſenſe of religion in others, eſpecially in thoſe who were more immediately under her care; which, tho it be a thing too much neglected by ſuch as have the government of families, is, in itſelf, of the greateſt importance, not only on account of the advantages of it with reſpect to particular perſons, but as it tends, beyond any other method that can be taken, to promote public order and happineſs.

And as the love of God and our neighbour are inſeparably connected, both in the nature of things, and the chriſtian revelation, they had a united influence in her life. Her religion did not make her reſerved and unſociable, as is ſometimes the caſe when it degenerates into a narrow gloomy ſuperſtition; but, on the contrary, the ſweetneſs and amiableneſs of her natural temper was very much improved by thoſe exalted principles of generous and god-like benevolence, which chriſtianity inſpires. It was her particular ſtudy to be not only uſeful, but agreeable to thoſe with whom ſhe converſed, and make all around her eaſy and happy. The greateſt charm which ſhe apprehended in proſperity was, not the rendring outward life more uſeleſly ſplendid and ornamental, but the opportunity it afforded for more extenſive beneficence: and her charity was not confined to the little peculiarities of a party, which debaſes the moſt important of moral virtues, what is, in itſelf, the nobleſt diſpoſition of human nature,

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and robs it of all its native loveliness and beauty.

But there is one part of her character which deserves to be mentioned with peculiar honour, and that is, the rational and becoming indifference she maintained with respect to all worldly enjoyments; the constant characteristic of a great mind, and one of the surest indications of true wisdom and goodness. She had formed a very mean opinion of the vain gaieties and pleasures of life, the trifling entertainments of pomp and luxury with which the bulk of the world are so strangely inamour'd, and which make so strong an impression on weak and vitious minds. She was not at all elated by a plentiful fortune, or outward marks of distinction, but always preserved a moderation and evenness of temper; tho she declared, at the same time, that she thought it her duty to live up in some measure to her circumstances, and support the honour of that station in which providence had placed her. And indeed this was not only an argument of her

virtue, but a wiſe and judicious reflection, and ſhews that ſhe entertain'd right notions of human life. For it is altogether as unnatural to ſee penury and avarice in affluent circumſtances, as prodigality and luxury in a low condition. Let me add to this, that, tho ſhe had a great deal of generoſity, ſhe conducted all her affairs with an exact and regular œconomy, and had form'd excellent rules for that purpoſe; which ought not to be regarded as a thing of little conſequence, a mere point of outward decency diſtinct from the proper duty of a chriſtian, ſince 'tis a neceſſary branch of ſocial virtue. So that in her religion and prudence met, a too rare and unuſual conjunction, and the want of which makes *the good* of ſo many *evil ſpoken of.* Her religion was without affectation, her charity free and extenſive, and her diſcretion, modeſty, and great humility, join'd with an affable, eaſy, and obliging behaviour, render'd her piety, contempt of the world, and all the other virtues that adorn'd her character, more graceful and amiable.

I CAN'T conclude without mentioning one thing more, namely, that thoſe who were moſt intimate with her obſerv'd her virtues, and the excellent diſpoſitions of her mind to be conſtantly improving. She made the ſtricteſt remarks on her own temper and conduct, and ſeem'd to aim at perfection in both, as far as the neceſſary weakneſs and frailty of human nature will allow. It was the grand buſineſs of her life to ſecure her maker's approbation, and, in order to this, ſhe endeavour'd to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameleſs.* And, as one would naturally expect from ſo pious, and benevolent, ſo well-regulated, honourable, and uſeful a life, the thoughts of death were not at all uneaſy to her; but ſhe talk'd of it often, and particularly a few days before her departure, with the greateſt calmneſs and tranquillity, free from all that anxiety, from all thoſe ſuſpicions and terrors, which generally attend a conſciouſneſs of guilt, and a partial, wavering, inconſtant virtue.

THIS ſhort ſketch, which I have given of her character, naturally ſuggeſts to her afflicted and ſorrowful conſort, and to all her other relations (and I may add to this whole church, of which ſhe had been for a conſiderable time a very worthy member) the greatneſs of their loſs. But in order to reconcile their minds, in ſome meaſure, to it, I would intreat them to conſider, not only that 'tis the appointment of the all-wiſe God, to whoſe providence 'tis fit for us, in all caſes, abſolutely to ſubmit; but, moreover, that 'twill be to her unſpeakable gain, ſince we have good reaſon to believe, that ſhe is of that happy number who ſhall be rais'd, at the great day, to glory, honour, and immortality. *Sorrow not*, therefore, *even as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo, them alſo who ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him* *.

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 13, 14.

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IN the death of this excellent perſon there is a very inſtructive leſſon for us all. —— From her example, who was cut off in the prime of her days, in the vigour and ſtrength of youth, the young and gay may learn the great folly of being preſumptuous, and unmindful of a future ſtate, and of giving themſelves up to vanity, and the irregular purſuits of ſenſual pleaſure. ——— The rich are taught not to be *high minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God*; to *do good*, to *be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up, in ſtore for themſelves, a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life* *. —— And from the ſuddenneſs of her departure, we are furniſh'd with a very ſtrong motive to apply ourſelves, without delay, to the univerſal practice of religion, that we may not be ſummon'd to leave the world, before we have diſcharg'd that neceſſary work, for which God ſent us into

* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

it.

it. If the preſent melancholy occaſion has this good effect upon us, to make us *conſider*, ſeriouſly, our *latter end*, reform all our errors and vices, and enter upon a ſtrict, and conſtant courſe of virtue, it will lay the foundation of an eaſy and comfortable life, a ſerene and peaceful death, and of eternal joy and bleſſedneſs hereafter: and then, each of us may ſay, from his own experience, in the words of the text, *it is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to go to the houſe of feaſting.*

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